

The teams moved to the other end of Arrowhead, and Reesing wasted absolutely no time getting the KU offense on track. On the first play of the second quarter, on a second-and-nine from the KU 35, he beat the blitz with a bullet to Meier, who was streaking down a seam along the left hash. The play went for 39 yards, four shy of the total the Jayhawks had struggled to gain on 13 first-quarter snaps. The KU faithful rose as one and unleashed an ear-splitting roar. *This* was the offense they had come to know and love. Game on.

It was only one snap in a game that featured 164 plays from scrimmage, but you could immediately sense a seismic shift. Football can be a funny game that way. Momentum turns on a dime. The Jayhawks suddenly had it. They rushed to the line. They were about to take their first snap in Missouri territory, from the 26-yard line. It was time to get the equalizer.

KU went three wide, and Missouri was in man coverage. Moore was the nickel back—opposite wideout Dexter Fields, who was in the right slot. “I’ll never forget it,” Moore says. “I’ll *never* forget it. I’ve played it back in my mind so many times.”

At the snap, Fields headed on a straight line upfield. Through film study, Moore knew exactly where he was going, and the natural thing would have been to follow in close pursuit. His mind told him to do otherwise. “Once he crossed 10 yards, I knew he was going vertical,” Moore says. “Then he started speeding up, so I came off like he was open. I had the right to turn around and run with him. I did, but I kind of sloughed off on him.”

Reesing saw two things: Fields running free down the middle of the field and a pocket that was collapsing. Quickly. Linebacker Brock Christopher was coming on a blitz from Reesing’s right, and he had a free run at the quarterback.

“Because of pressure, I had to throw it a little off my back foot,” Reesing says. “I didn’t get to step into the throw as much as I needed to. When you can’t step into your throw, you get a little less oomph on it. That, combined with the fact that William Moore is a hell of a player and had enough speed to make up the ground he had lost on Dexter, is why it happened.”

*It* was a goal-line interception. As Fields cupped his hands to make the catch, Moore cut in front and reached high over his head to pull the ball in. It was his seventh interception of the season, tying the school record held by Pro Football Hall of Famer Roger Werhli, and his fourth consecutive game with a pick. It was also Reesing’s first interception in 213 attempts. Since throwing three picks in the Big 12 opener against Kansas State, he had gone six games without one.

“The All-American safety does what he’s been doing all year, since the injury sustained by Pig Brown,” said Musburger. “He snuffs out the Kansas scoring drive.”

As he walked the TV audience through the replay, Herbstreit added: “Brent, William Moore proving week after week that he’s a ball hawk. Missouri not slowing down. They’re still coming after Todd Reesing, despite the big play by Meier. And for good reason.”

When he let the ball go, Reesing was confident he had thrown a game-tying touchdown. He was sure of it. Worst-case scenario, he thought the pass would fall incomplete. “If I get to step into my throw, it’s a touchdown, no problem,” he says.

That comes as news to Moore. Told that Reesing was preparing to celebrate with one of his signature upper-cut fist pumps, he laughs. “As soon as I saw the quarterback release the ball, I broke in front of [Fields],” Moore says. “I didn’t overrun the pass. I undercut it.

“I baited him so good. I made it look like my man was wide open. He was jogging his route, he was running a go route, and I read it the whole way.”

At halftime of his games at Hayti High, Moore would exchange his helmet for a tuba. “I don’t think Coach [Jerry Bethune] was too fond of it,” he says, “but he knew how much I liked the band.”

Moore is humble and respectful, but over the course of a two-minute dissection of the play, he proudly uses a form of the verb *bait* a half-dozen times.

“I’m not tooting my own horn,” Moore says, “but I remember baiting him.”

The significance of the play wasn’t lost on Reesing. Everyone knew how important turnovers would be in a game of this magnitude. The Jayhawks had made the first big mistake. They had grabbed the momentum on the Meier reception. Missouri needed only 18 seconds to seize it back.

“That was probably the biggest play of the first half,” Reesing says.

No, it was the biggest play of the *game*. Although there would be 128 more plays from scrimmage, none was more pivotal than the Moore interception. And on their next snap, the Tigers rode their newfound momentum to produce the second biggest play of the night. Officials originally ruled the interception a touchback, but the replay judge determined that Moore had established possession before crossing the goal line. The ball was placed at the Missouri two-yard line. “I still think it was a bad spot,” Daniel says. “I would have liked to have started at the 20.”

From the shadow of his own end zone, he went under center. This was no time to be daring. Missouri had dodged a missile and was just glad to have regained possession with the lead. Had the ball been spotted at the one, Christensen would have called *Whale*—a quarterback sneak. But because the Tigers had those extra three feet of real estate with which to operate, he went with *Under Doubles Right Cut Check*. It

was a two-tight- end set. The line splits were squeezed foot to foot, and Temple was standing four yards deep in the end zone.

“We ran it in practice,” says Christensen, “but we never got in a situation where we used it that much.”

Adds Daniel: “We had one back-up [situation] play. Give it to Tony and let him run.” Temple didn’t exactly have fond memories of *Under Doubles Right Cut Check*. He remembers getting dumped for a game-changing safety in the fourth quarter of a 2005 loss at Kansas State. “It is not a play to bounce to the outside,” he says.

The play was designed to go behind Spieker, but after taking the handoff near the goal line, Temple *did* bounce it to the outside, and to his left. Considering he was so perilously close to the goal line, it was a risky move. It was also the right one.

“That’s part of the read,” Yost says. “He’s got to read the A-gap, but he’s got to see the end.”

That was John Larson, who crashed inside. Though he was effectively taken out of the play, he tied up two blockers: Rucker and Luellen. Plus, Larson had help behind him. Or so he thought. The problem for the Jayhawks arose when free safety Darrell Stuckey took a horrible angle—a straight line from the nine-yard line to the line of scrimmage. He got pinched inside, and Temple had the corner.

“The safety gets himself out of position,” says Yost. “He screws himself.”

Temple saw the play unfolding in front of him. There was no back- side pursuit — Gregory and Brown saw to that — and then Temple’s instincts took over. “I remember that end coming down and bouncing it to the outside,” he says.

As he continues to rewind the play more than three years later, Temple is sitting in a coffee house on State Line Road in Prairie Village, Kan., directly on the Missouri-Kansas border. He estimates that he ran for about 40 yards. Pinkel has about the same recollection.

“He had a feel for it,” Pinkel says. “They closed it off inside and it bounces. How huge was that play? All of a sudden, the ball is at the 35-yard line, and you’re rolling. You’ve got the field position back.

“It was huge. *Huge*—bigger than the average fan would think. That was a field-position game, and that was also a hit-you-in-the-mouth momentum play.”

The run down the left sideline that knocked out a few front teeth covered all of 17 yards. But considering the situation, it was much bigger than that. Temple may as well have run for 98 yards.